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WHIRRAKEE

July 2012 Vol. 33 No. 6

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552. Web address: www.BendigoFNC.com.au
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Office Bearers for 2011 - 2012

President	Jan Orr		5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer		0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*		
Secretary	Stuart Fraser		5443 1326
Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley		
Treasurer	Ben Goonan		
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley		5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*		
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan		
Librarian	Diana Collier	(an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer		0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Rod Orr		5443 5668

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 33, No. 6, July 2012

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
Once the winter solstice has passed, the cold and the wet are a lot easier to put up with. Soon the wattles will be out in full force and the days are getting longer and, and, and.... Bendigo will be hosting the SEANA camp. As you can see from the photos in the colour section and John Lindner's excursion report, there are many interesting things all around us, even in winter, and the Club is ready to show these off to the participants of the camp in August. The excursions have been checked and polished, but many helpers are needed to allow all proceedings to run smoothly. So why not put up your hand to help, then put on your winter woollies and join in the exploration of Bendigo's surrounding natural treasures.

Front page photographer: Wendy Radford Many front page photos recently have been from Family Nature Club excursions, so I thought we might have something different this time... but then I could not resist this wonderful photo which was taken on the 'little kids and giant trees' excursion to the Wellsford forest in June...the colour version and more photos are on page 5 and 6.

Short Notices

Excursion Program – Botany and Birds

Saturday July 14 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
Focus: Botany and birds
Venue: Kamarooka **Leader**: Matthew Comer
Meeting point: Bendigo Field Naturalists' Clubrooms, Old High St. Golden Square
Bring: binoculars, lunch, water and clothes for all weathers **Contact person:** Jan Orr, 54435668 r.orr@westnet.com.au

This is the last trial excursion in preparation for the SEANA camp, August 17th – 20th. We hope many members will participate in the program (which would have been sent to everybody separately). Members are invited to join the activities and act as helpers during the excursions. More than 100 people are expected from outside Bendigo, some from inter-state. Members who are willing to help are exempt from the registration fee.

Fire Operations Planning Consultation.

Regional environment groups have been working to improve the Fire Operations Planning (FOP) consultation process. DSE have offered an opportunity for environment groups to participate in a FOP consultation in July, and to follow this up with another meeting in September.

The meeting will be held on **Thursday 12th July 2012, 5-9 pm.**
The draft agenda is on page 10. If you would like further information, or are interested in participating please contact Richard Goonan at:
richardgoonan@impulse.net.au

History of Kennington Reservoir book
Bill and Carol Holsworth's book, *A Fine Sheet of Water: Kennington Reservoir, Bendigo*, was launched in April this year. The first printing sold out, but more copies are available now. Ring Bill on 5443 4063.

Regent Honeyeater Project, Benalla, community tree planting.

Weekend 25-26August
Organiser: John Lindner
Mob: 0447 111409, jwl.bendigo@gmail.com
(this is the best way to contact me)

This long-term project involves restoring habitat for native fauna, particularly this endangered honeyeater, which once used to frequent Bendigo, alas no more. We plant indigenous species of trees, shrubs and herbs in well-prepared areas, and are informed about the many aspects of the project (eg. nest boxes for arboreal animals, regular bird surveys). Organization is meticulous. You work pretty hard and go home feeling exhilarated.
What is provided: accommodation in the Guide Hall (mattresses on the floor), Saturday dinner at the TAFE restaurant, Sunday barbeque lunch, hot drinks for morning and afternoon tea. Bring all other food. I will be going over on Friday night, and have room for 2 other people. I have also asked members of the Bendigo Bushwalking and Outdoor Club, some of whom came last year. I need to know who is interested one week before.

Garden Working Bee

A weeding session of the Club's garden has been organized for
Saturday 7th July at 1pm.

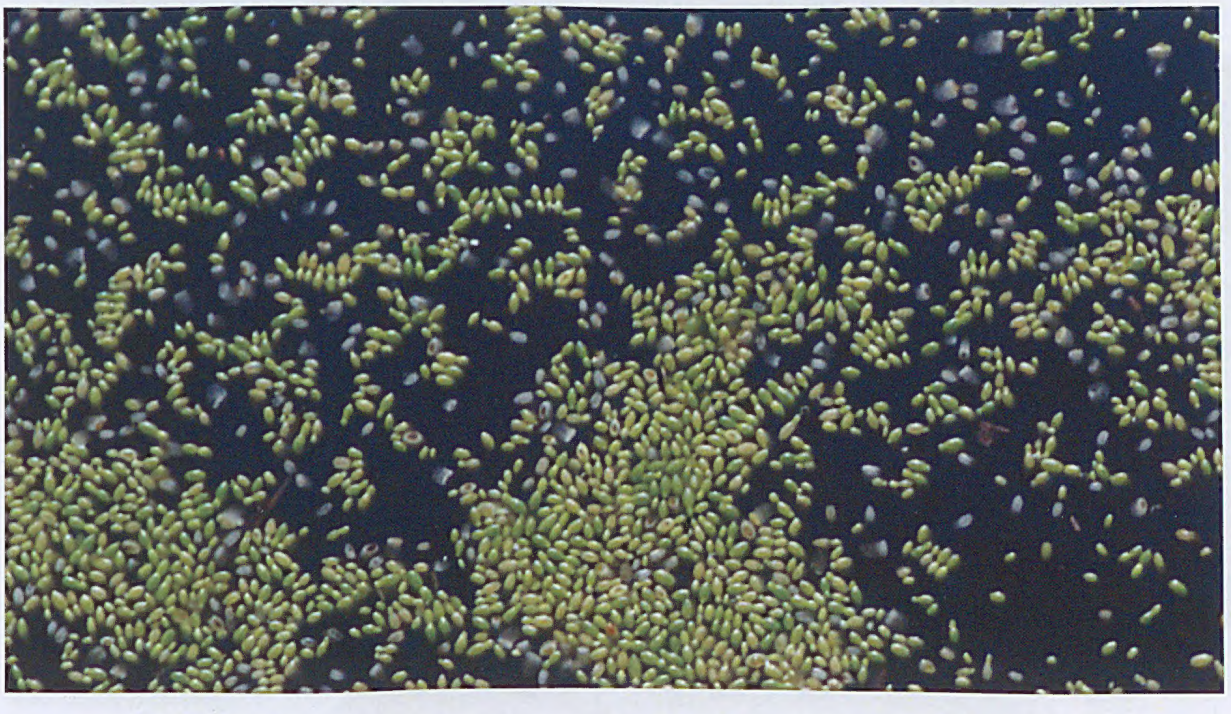
All are welcome, bring your weeding utensils if you have any, or just turn up.

Amazing Fungal Biodiversity
For the last three years, Joy Clusker and Ray Wallace have been busy making a list of fungi in the region. So far they have been able to identify 200 species, with over a hundred remaining un-named. More details on page 7.

A sinking feeling at Kamarooka? Photos and text by Rod Orr

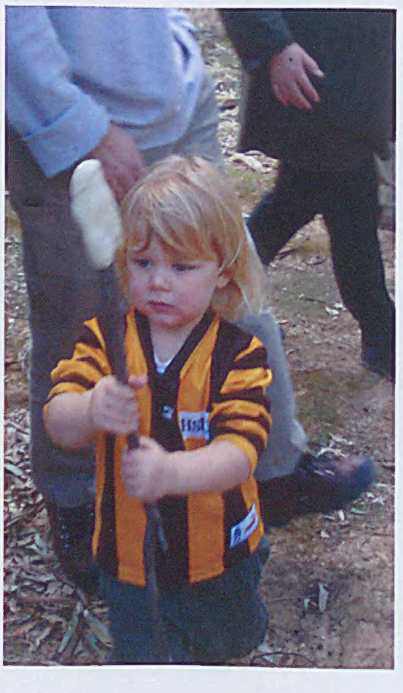
Don't you get a sinking feeling when you approach a dam somewhere fairly remote out in the forest and then you see that it is almost completely covered with a pale green floating 'scum'? The first thought is Blue-green algae, isn't it?

But looking at the 'scum' up close, no, it's not Cyanobacteria at all, it's Tiny Duckweed (*Wolffia australiana)*, which is a rare plant in this region. Its distribution is also poorly known in Victoria but it's considered to be rare in this State and also rare for the whole of Australia. It really is tiny - each leaf is a separate plant < 1mm long. It is a flowering plant, but I haven't been able to look closely enough to find flowers. I'll revisit this dam in Spring & Summer to discover its flowering season.



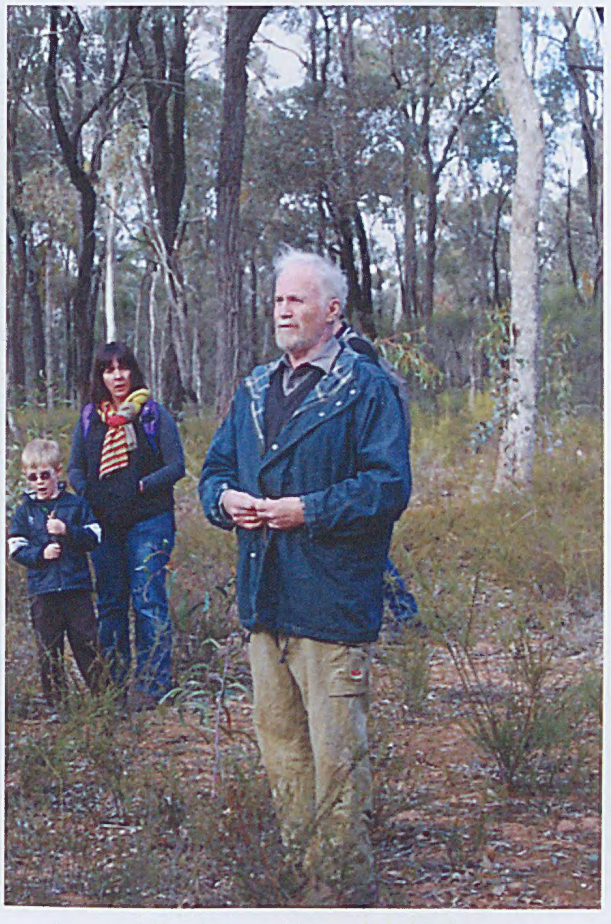
Family Nature club excursion : 'Little kids and giant trees' (and sweet bush cooking)
(Photos by Wendy Radford). Check out Tamara Marwood's blog of the Family Nature Club activities and more photos at: http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com.au/

All of this looks like a lot of winter-fun



How to measure the circumference of an ironbark tree?
Use kids!

(Photos by Tamara Marwood and Joy Clusker)



This is the Bendigo Creek at Kamarooka (from the June wetland excursion). How beautiful!

More winter fungi. These images did not make it into the *Whirrakee* last month. These fungi were spotted in the Bendigo fernery in the middle of May (Photos and text by Joy Clusker)

N.B. ↑ Joy also identified Jenny Shield's unknown fungus in the June *Whirrakee* as *Gymnopilus junonius*

← *Mycena yuulongicola,*

Mycena nargan ↓

At first glance the box-ironbark forest, which surrounds Bendigo would not appear to be a fungi rich habitat, nor indeed further north in the drier Whipstick mallee. The obvious exception in our area is the damper Mt Alexander. The dry box – ironbark forests , however, house a surprising number of fungi. Our list contains over 200 species, which we have been able to identify. Further to that, we have recorded an extra 120 or so species which have remained unidentified for various reasons, this has sometimes been merely our own inability, or at other times that the species, however distinctive, just do not appear in the literature. One example of something that was not just "a little brown job" was a lovely red almost rubber band like slime mould growing on Wallaby dung, very, very distinctive, but just not there in the field guides etc, this is one example of many. The moulds and rusts are missing from our list as we are concentrating on the macro fungi. For those interested, it is almost certain that everyone has their own special spots, we have found the following urban areas excellent to spend an hour or two on a fungi foray. *(Joy and Ray's list will appear in a future Whirrakee, ed.)*

- The Bendigo Botanic Gardens at White Hills
- The fernery at Rosalind park.
- The old Eaglehawk State School pine plantation, now under control of the DSE.
- The linear bushland reserve along the Spring Gully creek , north of the store.
- Mt Alexander, especially the Oak forest.

Excursion report- Forests to the south-east of Bendigo 16th June

Author: John Lindner
Bird List: Glenise Moors

The excursion was intended as a test run of a one-day excursion to be part of the SEANA conference, 17 – 20 August. The main objective of the excursion was to observe birds in various habitats, but unfortunately, due to the rather cold weather, they were rather scarce, until we got to the last stop at Daley Lane, when finally they were plentiful. Despite the lack of birds, I found that it was worthwhile examining the habitat at each spot, since its quality determines to a large degree what fauna is likely to occur. The more species of eucalypts there are, the greater the variety of flowering times and therefore food resources for various birds.

Participants: Rod and Jan Orr, Gary and Judy Smith, John Lindner, Kate Lindner, Glenise Moors, Anne Bridley (leader)

Stops and Observations at each

1. Emu Creek Road, with the Sedgwick State Forest on one side of the road and cleared land on the other

This location was a little salutary, as the Sedgwick Forest had been burned for fuel reduction in 2011 as part of the state program. Where formerly there was quite a thick understory of shrubs, now there are virtually none, with many completely burned trees, no acacias, and bare soil with evident surface erosion following the heavy rains earlier this year.

The main eucalypts at this location were GB and RB. Further along the road, we could make a comparison with unburned forest, which still had good understory. On the other side of the road were open paddocks, representing regenerating forest with groups of shrubs, isolated trees and dense grasses.

Birds: Grey Fantail, Australian Raven, Red Wattlebird, Australian Magpie, Musk Lorikeet. Further along the road: Maned Duck, Galah, White-winged Chough, Australasian Grebe.

2. Junction of Orr and Bull Tracks, Lyell Forest

This woodland habitat presented an almost enchanting prospect of excellent habitat for birds or any other fauna for that matter. Its various qualities were very evident:

- 6 species of eucalypts (YG, GB, YB, RRG, MB, RIB).
- A scattering of quite large, old trees, with leaning or contorted trunks, many broken branches and hollows.
- Plenty of fallen timber on the ground.
- Plenty of leaf litter.
- A range of age classes among the eucalypts (i.e. saplings to very old).
- Variable sized open spaces between the trees.
- A good variety of shrubs (Chinese Scrub, Gold-dust Wattle, Golden Wattle, Grey Everlasting, Matted Bush-pea, Wild Cherry, Golden Everlasting and others).
- To one side, an open paddock completely surrounded by forest, particularly RIB on the far side. The paddock had some notably large remnant trees.
- A large dam with open water and a wetland at the upstream end.

Birds: Crimson Rosella, Long-billed Corella, Eastern Rosella, Brown Tree-creeper, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Dusky Moorhen. Anne had observed Black-chinned Honeyeaters and Scarlet Robins here on other occasions. We saw some vigorous echidna diggings by the side of the track.

3. Pilcher Track, Lyell Forest

The eucalypts here were mostly RIB, with some YG, RSB, RB, GB, YB and RRG – 7 species is pretty impressive. There was a scattering of big, old trees. Understory shrubs comprised Chinese Scrub, Golden Wattle, Daphne Heath, Silky Hakea, various peas and others.

There were numerous small Blue Pincushions plants.

Birds: Grey Shrike-thrush, Weebill, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Galah, Eastern Rosella, Musk Lorikeet, Noisy Miner.

4. Andrew's Track, near Carnochan's Road junction, Pilchers Bridge Nature Conservation Reserve

Eucalypts were RSB, RB, GB, YG, YB, MB, again a good variety. Understory shrubs comprised Gold-dust Wattle, Chinese Scrub and others. As this location had been the area for a trial thinning (2004 - 2010) of the dense post-harvesting regrowth from former years, there were large amounts of fallen timber on the ground. This woody debris is prohibited from being removed. There was plentiful leaf litter on the ground. Amongst the ground-covers were a prostrate *Bossaea*, *Hovea* species and *Goodenia* species.

In a large, rather broken down Grey Box with dead spouts and hollows, we observed a Yellow-footed Antechinus running up and down the trunk as it either foraged for insects or tried to make itself scarce from our presence. We also saw a Black Wallaby here.

Birds: Australian Raven, White-winged Chough, Scarlet Robin, Striated Thornbill, White-eared Honeyeater, Brown Thornbill, Little Eagle. Two male Scarlet Robins were observed in Myrtle Creek Road.

5. Bend in Andrew's Track further to the west, Pilchers Bridge Nature Conservation Reserve

A large dam is located here on one side of the road, and the creek emanating from it crosses the road. This is one of the BFNC's "sacred sites", as many years ago Powerful Owls inhabited this area, making use of a dense stand of Silver Wattles, which once grew here. These large trees are no longer present, but there are new saplings. Eucalypts include RSB, GB, RB and YB.

Acacias in the gully include Silver Wattle, Late Black Wattle and Cootamundra Wattle. Otherwise there is a lot of bare ground, some grassy, with patches of small shrubs.

Birds: Scarlet Robin, White-throated Treecreeper, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow Thornbill, Weebill, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Grey Fantail, Yellow Robin, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Golden Whistler. Eastern Grey Kangaroos were also observed here.

6. Stony Crossing, Axe Creek

This is a very beautiful spot, with the background sound of the water in the creek. The new crossing is a concrete causeway, but the old one is made of large stones wedged tightly together. On the other side of the creek, an impressive, high outcrop of Ordovician rock, forming a cliff with broad, vertical strata, forces the creek to diverge around it. The Axe Creek Landcare Group has fenced off small circular areas along the bank to protect the grasses and shrubs from grazing. Eucalypts include GB, YB, LLB and RRG. Acacias include Late Black Wattle, Wirilda Wattle and Spreading Wattle, these last two with some plants in flower. Golden Everlasting is abundant. We saw a large Water Rat run over the causeway and swim upstream. A Common Froglet was also observed in the water.

Birds: Laughing Kookaburra, Yellow Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, White-naped Honeyeater, Galah, Red Wattlebird, Blackbird, Grey Shrike-thrush, Long-billed Corella, Crimson Rosella, Striated Thornbill, Superb Fairy-wren.

7. Hogan's Road, between Springs Road and Mandurang South Road

This is the site of a very large dam in the forest, whose wall was undermined by collapse along the line of a buried outlet pipe within it, due to the heavy rains in 2010 and after. As a result, the dam is now almost empty. Eucalypts include GB, YB, RSB and RIB, with Chinese Scrub, Golden Wattle, Gold-dust Wattle and Spreading Wattle.

Birds: Flame Robin, Grey Fantail, Mistletoebird, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. On other occasions, Anne and the Orrs have observed Pink Robins, Chestnut-rumped Hylacolas and Yellow Robins at this location.

8. Daley Lane, Coliban Water Reserve, Sedgwick

Eucalypts included RRG, LLB, RSB, YB and RB, with Blackwood and Lightwood wattles among the shrubs. During a walk along the

race, the following birds were observed: Buff-rumped Thornbill, Scarlet Robin, Flame Robin, Weebill, Yellow Thornbill , Crimson Rosella, Grey Shrike-thrush, Australian Magpie, Red-browed Finch, Silvereye, Brown Thornbill, Long-billed Corella, Eastern Spinebill, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, White-throated Treecreeper, Grey Fantail.
Grevillea rosmarinifolia (Sedgwick form) was observed on a bank of the channel. Moth larvae were seen on Creeping Mistletoe growing on River Red Gum.

Eucalypt species abbreviations

GB	Grey Box
YB	Yellow Box
RB	Red Box
LLB	Long-leaf Box
MB	Mealy Bundy
RIB	Red Ironbark
YG	Yellow Gum
RRG	River Red Gum
RSB	Red Stringybark

Draft (!) Agenda – Fire Operations Pre-season consultation meeting, DSE and regional environment interest groups
12th July 2012, 5pm – 9pm
(N.B. the final schedule was not available at time of printing, but should not vary too much form the one given here, ed.)

- Preview maps and other data provided 4:30-5:00pm

1. Introductions and context (Peter Condliffe – 10 min) 5:00-5:10pm
   - Peter's role as independent facilitator
   - Who is in the room
   - Quick description of the process of reaching agreement to hold this meeting
   - Outcomes from FOP the consultation meeting
2. DSE policy update (Scott Falconer– 5 min) 5:10-5:15pm
   - Recent or upcoming changes that may affect the region
3. 2012 – 13 Fire Operations Planning Context (Simon Brown - 10 min) 5:15-5:25pm
   - Quick overview of FOP process and where we are now, engagement points in that process, opportunities to provide feedback
   - The engagement commitment and who else will be engaged

   Proposed burns (Simon Brown - 50 min,) 5:25-6:15pm
   - DSE Presentation of proposed burns broken into geographic areas based on work centre (Bendigo, Heathcote/Rushworth, Maryborough/Avoca, Castlemaine, Inglewood/St Arnaud Cohuna?)
   - This will include describing proposed burns, proposed burns that have already been removed and why.

   Discussion/Questions (45 min) 6:15-7:00pm
   - Detailed maps and other data will be provided to assist/inform discussions and questions.
4. Break and refresh (15 min) 7:00-7:15pm
5. Environmental Management
   - DSE to describe methods and strategies for addressing impacts across all planned burns in the 2012-13 FOP (Sharon Slater - 30 min) 7:15-7:45pm
   - Discussion and Questions (30 min) 7:45-8:15pm
   - Monitoring program for the Box-Ironbark (Scott Falconer – 15 mins) 8:15-8:30pm
   - Discussion and Questions (15 min) 8:30-8:45pm
6. FOP Process and September Meeting (15 min) 8:45-9:00pm
   - What happens next – FOP consultation process from here?
   - How can groups make an effective FOP submission – Handout summary

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday July 11 7.30pm
Dr Mike Weston and Kasun Ekanayake, Faculty of Science and Technology, School of Life and Environ-mental Sciences, Deakin University: 'Little Ravens as predators and adaptations of prey'

Wednesday August 8 7.30pm
Dr Clive Minton, Victorian Wader Study Group: 'A Lifetime of Bird Banding'

Wednesday September 12 7.30pm
Dr Peter Vesk, The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions, School of Botany, University of Melbourne: 'Towards spatial prioritisation of revegetation for birds'

Wednesday October 10 7.30pm
Dr Gregory Holland, Research Fellow, Faculty of Science and Technology, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University: 'Fire in box-ironbark forests: an experimental investigation of ecological outcomes'

Wednesday November 14 7.30pm
Professor Max Finlayson, Director, Centre of Research Excellence, Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University: 'The biodiversity crisis – globally and Australia'

Club Excursions

Saturday July 14 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
Focus: Botany and birds
Venue: Kamarooka **Leader**: Matthew Comer
Meeting point: Bendigo Field Naturalists' Clubrooms, Old High St. Golden Square
Bring: binoculars, lunch, water and clothes for all weathers **Contact person:** Jan Orr, 54435668 r.orr@westnet.com.au

Regular Fauna Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

Garden Working Bee

A weeding session of the Club's garden has been organized for
Saturday 7th July at 1pm

All are welcome, bring your weeding utensils if you have any, or just turn up.

Family Nature Club

The next activity will involve planting along the Bendigo Creek in Huntly on July 15. Please register if you are turning up with family, or let Jan and Rod know if you intend to offer assistance.
Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326

Fire Operations Planning Consultation

The meeting will be held on Thursday 12th July 2012, 5-9 pm. See page 3 and page 10 for details

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Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.